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## Greek Involvement and Personality

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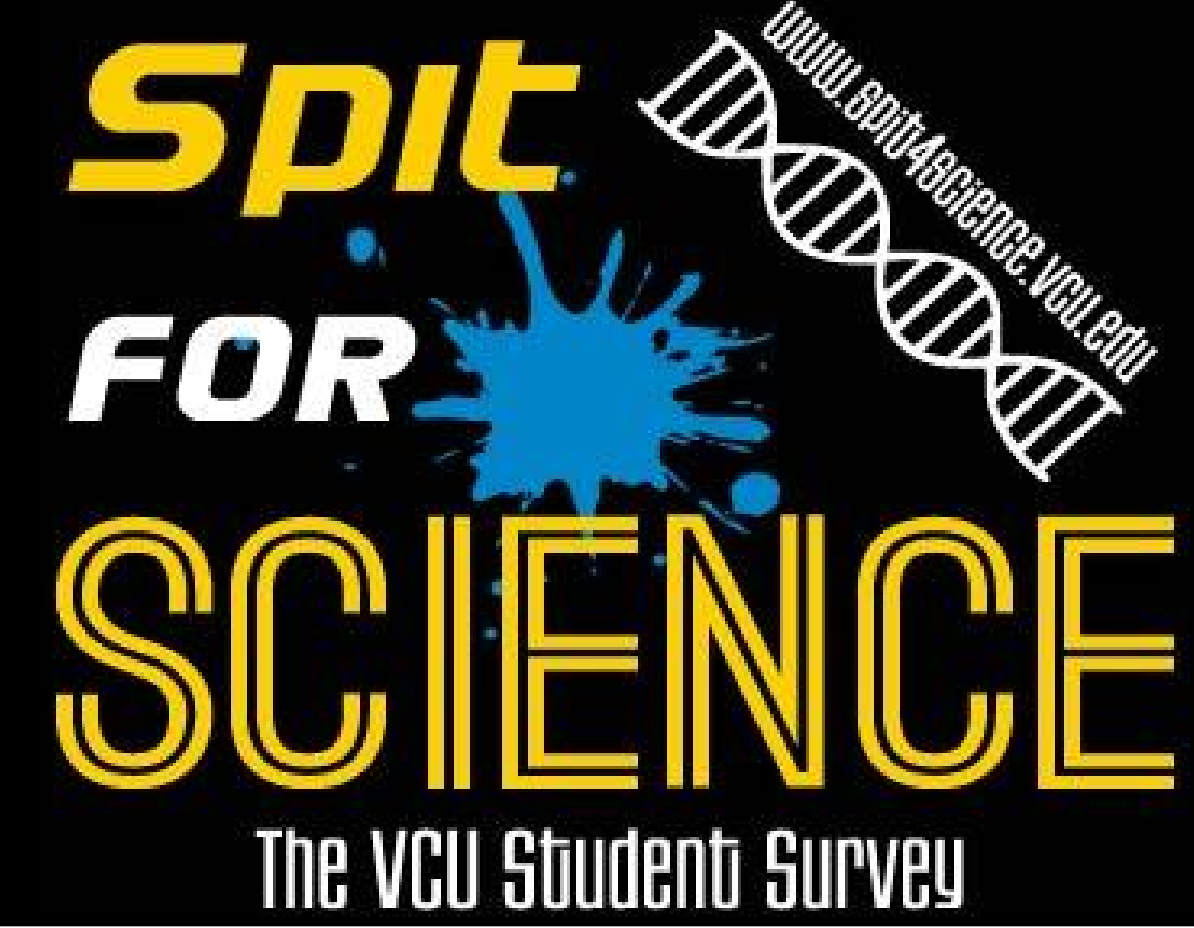




VCU

# Greek Involvement and Personality

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## Abstract

Many young college students participate in Greek life to involve themselves with a group of people similar to themselves and to engage in life on campus. The intent of this research is to measure the relationship between Greek membership and/or involvement and personality. Data from Spit for Science: the VCU Student Survey will be examined to analyze this relationship. The participants included freshman fall and sophomore spring survey participants from the 2012 Spit for Science cohort. The measures for the study were the Big Five Inventory (BFI) and the UPPS impulsive behavior scales. The BFI includes the personality traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness. The UPPS scales include the domains of lack of perseverance, lack of premeditation, negative urgency, positive urgency, and sensation seeking. Results indicated that individuals who scored higher on traits of extraversion ( $r = 0.209$ ), sensation seeking ( $r = 0.108$ ), and conscientiousness ( $r = 0.098$ ) spent more time involved in fraternity or sorority parties and events. Additionally, individuals who are members of Greek life scored higher on traits of extraversion ( $r = 0.098$ ) and conscientiousness ( $r = 0.067$ ), but lower on agreeableness ( $r = -0.062$ ). We found that personality traits are associated with membership and involvement in Greek organizations. This study provides insight on personality characteristics correlated with the Greek system involvement and highlights areas of research potentially related to previous findings on alcohol consumption in Greek life.

## Introduction

- Many young college students involve themselves with Greek life
- It gives them a sense of belonging where they can associate themselves with people similar to them (Kohlman, 2007)
- This also causes them to want to behave according to the “norms” of their group, such as drinking more (Barry, 2007)
- There are some noticeable personality traits of those involved with Greek life, such as higher rates of extraversion (Lepley, 1942)

**Objective:** explore the associations between Greek life and personality using the Big Five Inventory and UPPS impulsivity scales

**Hypothesis:** The personality traits of high extraversion and low agreeableness will be correlated with Greek involvement.

## Methods

- Participants = freshman fall and sophomore spring survey participants from 2012 Spit for Science cohort
- Personality measures = Big Five Inventory (BFI) and UPPS impulsive behavior scales
  - BFI → the personality traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness
    - Measured on 5-point ordinal scale with options ranging from disagree strongly to agree strongly
  - UPPS scales → the domains of lack of perseverance, lack of premeditation, negative urgency, positive urgency, and sensation seeking
    - Measured on 4-point ordinal scale with options ranging from disagree strongly to agree strongly
- Greek life measures
  - “Are you a member of a fraternity or sorority?”
    - Binary variable
  - “How often do you participate in fraternity/sorority parties or events?”
    - Measured on a 4-point ordinal scale with options ranging from never to often
- Spearman’s correlations were calculated to assess the relationship between personality and Greek life
  - Non-parametric data

## Results

Correlations with BFI

		Member	Frequency	BFI Agreeableness	BFI Conscientiousness	BFI Extraversion	BFI Neuroticism	BFI Openness
Member	$r$ $p$ -value	1.000 <0.001						
Frequency	$r$ $p$ -value	0.550 <0.001	1.000 <0.001					
BFI Agreeableness	$r$ $p$ -value	-0.062 0.033	-0.010 0.724	1.000 <0.001				
BFI Conscientiousness	$r$ $p$ -value	0.067 0.021	0.098 0.001	0.297 <0.001	1.000 <0.001			
BFI Extraversion	$r$ $p$ -value	0.098 0.001	0.209 <0.001	-0.027 0.187	0.124 <0.001	1.000 <0.001		
BFI Neuroticism	$r$ $p$ -value	0.007 0.816	-0.024 0.406	-0.207 <0.001	-0.149 <0.001	-0.094 <0.001	1.000 <0.001	
BFI Openness	$r$ $p$ -value	-0.040 0.165	0.000 1.000	0.073 <0.001	0.060 0.003	0.135 <0.001	-0.070 0.001	1.000 <0.001

**Table 1.** High conscientiousness ( $p = 0.021$ ) and high extraversion ( $p = 0.001$ ) but low agreeableness ( $p = 0.033$ ) were associated with Greek membership. In addition, high conscientiousness ( $p = 0.001$ ) and high extraversion ( $p < 0.001$ ) were associated with frequency of Greek involvement.

Correlations with UPPS

		Member	Frequency	UPPS Lack of Perseverance	UPPS Lack of Premeditation	UPPS Negative Urgency	UPPS Positive Urgency	UPPS Sensation Seeking
Member	$r$ $p$ -value	1.000 <0.001						
Frequency	$r$ $p$ -value	0.550 <0.001	1.000 <0.001					
UPPS Lack of Perseverance	$r$ $p$ -value	-0.034 0.287	-0.014 0.653	1.000 <0.001				
UPPS Lack of Premeditation	$r$ $p$ -value	0.016 0.623	0.042 0.190	0.388 <0.001	1.000 <0.001			
UPPS Negative Urgency	$r$ $p$ -value	0.043 0.181	0.007 0.817	0.157 <0.001	0.310 <0.001	1.000 <0.001		
UPPS Positive Urgency	$r$ $p$ -value	0.041 0.194	0.045 0.155	0.144 <0.001	0.324 <0.001	0.557 <0.001	1.000 <0.001	
UPPS Sensation Seeking	$r$ $p$ -value	0.039 0.215	0.108 0.001	-0.108 <0.001	0.108 <0.001	0.082 <0.001	0.211 <0.001	1.000 <0.001

**Table 2.** High sensation seeking ( $p = 0.001$ ) was associated with frequency of Greek involvement.

## Conclusion

- Current findings:
  - Individuals who show high levels of extraversion and conscientiousness were more likely to members of a fraternity or sorority
  - Individuals who show high levels of extraversion, conscientiousness, and sensation seeking spent more time attending fraternity/sorority parties and events
  - This may be related to extraverts being more likely to meet new people and more likely to attend events
- Consistent with previous research showing Greek involvement is associated with extraversion
  - Greek membership is also associated with increased drinking
  - Drinking rates may be related to easy access to alcohol and/or peer pressure
- This study provides insight on personality characteristics correlated with the Greek system that may work in concert with previous findings
- Additional research is needed to see Greek involvement’s association to alcohol use and association of Greek involvement with other traits

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